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Babel and Bethlehem

BY THEODORE CUYLER SPEERS

CHRISTMAS always casts a revealing light on the central problem of life—how and where to find God. One would suppose that after so many centuries of experience man would be wise in the ways of God, quick to perceive his presence and alert to follow his will. Yet it is an amazing fact that this Christmas will find the vast majority of people no better prepared for the entrance of Christ into life, no better informed as to the manner of his approach, no wiser in the ways of God than were the general run of people in the first century.

If you ask why there has been so little progress in the knowledge of God through all these centuries, I confess that I do not know, nor do I know anyone who does. I only know that it is a stubborn undeniable fact. I am very sure that more thinking needs to be done on the manner of God's approach to us, and that no season provides a more stimulating and provocative atmosphere for such thinking than the Christmas season. God came to light and life at Bethlehem. That extraordinary occurrence is worthy of our most persistent consideration.

There is another historic experience concerned with the discovery of God which contains characteristics common to our contemporary experience, yet which stands in marked contrast to the approach of God at Bethlehem.

Out of the dim, vague dusk of the long ago, from which historic experiences emerge so intermingled with mythology and legend as to be indistinguishable, comes the amazing adventure of the men of Babel. They were said to be the descendants of Noah. They lived a prosperous existence on the fruitful plains in which early civilization was cradled, between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. In years to come where they lived the great city of Babylon would rise to dominate the empire to which the city would give its name. These men of Babel were men of enterprise and initiative,

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Psalms School of

men of power and confidence, and withal, men of religion. They pooled their resources in a startling and unique adventure. In order to reach God they set about building a tower, which would relate earth with heaven. They undertook their enterprise with the utmost confidence and cooperation. They never completed it. Instead, confusion and dissent, disagreement and dismay settled upon them. Their partially completed tower was left standing as a monument to the failure of the men of Babel—a monument to mark the utter impossibility of man finding God through his own resources, in his own strength, guided only by his own wisdom.

Like many a monument erected by a generation for whom the experience which it marks is vivid and vital, but which becomes increasingly meaningless as the experience drops behind in the wake of history's movement, so the Tower of Babel has been long neglected. Its message has fallen on deaf ears, its wisdom has been unheeded. This ancient, half-completed adventure is well worth remembering, well worth considering, for somewhere between the Tower of Babel and the stable at Bethlehem lies the reason for mankind's pathetic and tragic failure to discover God and share in his fellowship. Furthermore, unless we can discern the weakness of the men of Babel, we shall not be able either to appreciate or to appropriate the wisdom of the Man of Bethlehem.

I

At the outset, it is clear that many modern men and women share the conviction of the men of Babel that God is a distant Personage, far removed from the pain and suffering, the toil and tribulation of earth. God, they say, is not here, sharing the heat and the burden of the day with us. He resides in some place apart, isolated and insulated from the suffering and the woe of humanity. He is indifferent; in fact, he is ignorant of our concerns. So the men of Babel believed, and under the impulse of that enervating thought they set about with daring to get through to God, to wake him out of his lethargy, to take his presence by storm, and by force of human strength and desire to intrude upon the fellowship of the Most High.

How many people there are now who still think of God that way—as someone apart, as someone dwelling in an ivory tower, far removed from the clamor and the conflict of earth! If his fellowship is to be had, if his power is to be shared, if his strength is to be harnessed to our struggles, we must get through to him, we must bestir ourselves. God looms above us like the lofty, cloud-hidden height of Mt. Everest—supreme, untouched, unconscious of the poverty, the weakness, the woe of those who struggle for life on the plains below. Some day men will reach the summit of Everest by dint of their own courage, in their own strength, girded by their own initiative and ingenuity. Everest will not assist them in that struggle. Everest does not even know that men are concerned to reach its summit. That is the picture of God which possessed the minds of the men of Babel and which possesses the minds of too many of our contemporaries. That is the teaching of Babel, but it is not the wisdom of Bethlehem.

The portrait of God which Bethlehem unveils is precisely the opposite. Bethlehem shows God to be so well aware of man's woe, to be so concerned about man's weakness, to be so much a part of man's struggle that, of his own volition, prompted by his own love, God comes down to the level of man. He sends his son to make the contact with earth, to open the door, to bring men into the fellowship of the Most High, not in some distant ivory palace, but here in the very midst of the dust and the dirt, the clamor and the conflict of our world.

The men of Babel and their modern counterparts mistakenly assume that the initiative to bridge the chasm between God and man must be taken by man. The light which lingers over the experience of Bethlehem clearly and unmistakably reveals the very opposite. God takes the initiative. He is ever more concerned to find us than we to find him. If our hearts are restless and empty without his friendship, his restlessness surpasses anything of which we dream in his concern to have fellowship with us.

"We must build a tower and get through to God"—so said the men of Babel in abysmal ignorance. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man open unto Me I will come in"—so spoke the Man of Bethlehem, in infinite wisdom.

The problem is one of reception and requires not so much aggressive activity as sensitive hearts. God is already here, present with us, participating in the affairs of our common life. Recognition is needed, not some new type of reorganization. The ancient tragedy still recurs in our midst. He comes to his own and is not received. He is in the world and the world knows him not. His light shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not. There stands One among us whom we know not. Still he stands eager, alert, aggressive, waiting to be recognized and received. That is the wisdom of Bethlehem, in contradistinction to the ignorance of Babel. "We must get busy and do something," said the men of Babel. "O be still, and know that I am God," said the Man of Bethlehem.

II

Further wisdom is to be found in thoughtful consideration of the nature of the approach to God which man so often makes, as contrasted with the nature of God's approach to man, which God persistently uses.

The men of Babel tried to get through to God by the use of material means. They attempted to erect a gigantic structure of brick and mortar, of stone and masonry, to bridge the chasm between earth and heaven, between man and God. Their attempt failed and their adventure ended, not in more light, but in more confusion. Instead of being nearer to God when they had finished, they unhappily felt that they were farther away from the goal which they so deeply desired.

That vast mistake of the men of Babel has been repeated over and over and over again, from that day to this. Man has thought to bridge the chasm between earth and heaven, between man and God, by means of

some external approach, some material project—more often than not by the erection of some gigantic structure. The same confusion, the same dismay, the same bewilderment which beset the men of Babel midway in their adventure, have settled upon all men and women who make the same mistake and who seek to find God by way of the external and the material.

The children of Israel repeated the error of the men of Babel—in the wilderness, under the leadership of Moses. In the promised land under the leadership of David they shared distinctly, realistically in the fellowship of the Most High. He was in their midst, guiding them, like a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud

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by day. The primitive tabernacle, an obviously temporary structure, a tent repeatedly wearing out, repeatedly needing to be repaired, day by day confronted the Hebrew people with the realization that the permanent abiding place of the Most High was in the heart of man, and not in any structure of man's making. But with the more settled civilization of Canaan the pioneering spirit vanished, and with it vanished also much of the sense of God's presence.

So, under the leadership of Solomon, they reached out for God in the manner of the men of Babel. They built a permanent temple, rich in ornament, rich in beauty, rich in ritual. Their adventure ended like the adventure of the men of Babel—in confusion and dismay. For all the strength of their structure, the strength and the wisdom of God did not appear. They never could regain the intimate sense of God's fellowship which their fathers had possessed without the benefit of the temple building. They never did regain that sense of God's fellowship until, hundreds of years later, they listened to the thundering condemnation of the prophets. "What unto Me is the multitude of your sacrifices, saith the Lord." "Who hath required this of your hands? Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

The teaching of the prophets is the wisdom of Bethlehem. God cannot be found through brick and mortar, through stone and masonry, but through character and service. God does not dwell in buildings made with hands, but in hearts made strong with justice, pure with righteousness, gentle with loving kindness. The only cathedral which ever possesses the spirit of the living God is the cathedral of loving hearts. If you cannot discern the presence of God in human beings and in the struggle to lift the standards of human life, you will not discover his presence in any building—I care not how beautiful its structure, its ornaments, its ritual. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Too many churches, too many cathedrals are not temples of the living God, but tombs. "He is not here; he is risen; he goeth before you." God is on the march, taking the initiative, sharing in the sorrow of men.

Too often man in his mistaken attempts to find God, and God in his tireless struggle to reach out to man, pass each other like ships in the night, moving in opposite directions, along charted courses which do not touch, which do not even bring them within sight of each other.

Too often the external approach which man makes, the attempt to reach God through the material means of buildings, fails because the buildings deflect man's attention, man's interest, man's devotion from the human element in life, from the ethical demands of life, from the only genuine and beautifully divine element in life, which is life itself. That was the error of the men of Babel, and it is an error which has not yet been discerned, and therefore has not yet been amended.

Too often men become discouraged, disappointed, disillusioned with themselves and with each other in the effort to find God in life, and they turn like the men of Babel to the futile attempt to find God in a building—an easier way, apparently, and perhaps because an easier way, a fatal mistake. There is no easy way to God. The demands upon us are stiff demands. Pride must be wrenched from its throne; humility must be in the ascendant, righteousness and justice must rule, and love must prevail; but these things are more difficult to build into the fabric and the structure of life than brick and mortar; therefore men turn to buildings and fail to find God. The harder way, the human way, though less easily accomplished, though often failing, does produce results out of all proportion to the small successes that come. God, in his overwhelming desire to get through to us, supports our feeble attempts to get through to him by the human way, above and beyond anything that we deserve.

A parish priest of austerity
Climbed up in a high church steeple
To be nearer God, that he might hand
His word down to the people.

In his age, God said, "Come down and die."
And he cried out from his steeple,
"Where art thou, Lord?" and the Lord replied,
"Down here among my people."

That is the wisdom of Bethlehem, which must ultimately conquer the ignorance of Babel. "The word became flesh and dwelt among us."

III

The problem, then, of bridging the chasm between man and God is not to be solved by bustling activity in the world without, unrelated to bustling activity in the world within. The presence of God is apprehended, and we respond to his approach and receive him not just by what we do, but by what we are.

The men of Babel were only partially mistaken in their thought of God. Vaguely they had stumbled upon a vast truth. God is higher than we are. He stands above us, removed from us not in geographical distance, but in moral quality. The great prophet Isaiah accurately discerned and described the chasm between God and man when he said to his people: "Thus saith the Lord: My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways. For as the heavens are high above the earth so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

God is beyond the reach of our mediocre lives. A chasm does separate us, but it is a chasm which no building will ever bridge, which no tower will ever cover. Man must be lifted, but not by human means, not by human wisdom, not by human power, certainly not by brick and mortar.

If it were left to us, if it depended upon us, that chasm never would be bridged. Not by our own bootstraps can we pull ourselves up to where God is. Babel is for all time a monument to that stubborn fact. Babel offers no hope, no way out of man's dilemma. God remains beyond our reach so far as anything that Babel teaches is concerned.

It is to Bethlehem that we turn with hope. It is to Bethlehem that we must turn if we are to climb the steep ascent to heaven. God comes to us on his own initiative, because of his love for us. He comes to us where we are and undeserving as we are, and offers to give us, if we will receive him and obey him, the strength, the wisdom from on high, which alone can lift us to where he is. Not by our strength and wisdom are we brought into his fellowship, but by his grace, so abundantly manifested in Bethlehem. "They that wait upon the Lord . . . shall mount up with wings"—to where he is.

Grace is not an escalator which will lift us without effort on our part to where God is. Effort of the most stringent sort is required of us, activity of the most disciplined kind is demanded of us. Our activity must be centered upon the effort not to reach God, but to receive God.

We lift the latch, we open the door, we bring him in to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We learn to receive him as we learn to serve him. If in purity of heart, in humbleness of life, in a spirit of loving kindness we set about the immemorial task of befriending God's children, of serving their needs, of reverencing their gifts—gifts apparent in even the least of his children—then does the miracle of Bethlehem reoccur and God comes with healing in his wings, to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, to lift us by his grace to the height where he abides.

The wisdom of Bethlehem is to the wisdom of Babel as the depth of the ocean is to the depth of a mud-puddle.

Come, then, and let us join the endless procession of the ages and make our way in humbleness and hopefulness, not to Babel but to Bethlehem, in reverent spirit "to see this thing which hath come to pass which the Lord hath made known unto us."

I Believe in the Church!

By Herbert Beecher Hudnut

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18.

"I BELIEVE in the Holy Catholic Church"—this is one of the great assertions of our Christian faith. A holy church is one consecrated to religious use, righteous, set apart in the service of God. "Catholic" means universal—a church which has the gospel of salvation for all nations. We use the word church to include all men who believe on Christ and follow him in humility and love. So we see at once that such a belief is no child's play. Here is no room for idle speculation or for passing fancy. It takes all there is of a man—all of his mind, will, heart and strength, to believe in the church in these amazingly confusing and shadowed days!

This righteous, universal church is beset without and within by foes. She is beleaguered on all sides. In some places she has retired to the Catacombs. While her undoing is partly her own fault, there are many who feel that persecution for the righteous is inevitable in our world—that our Lord never promised ease or smooth sailing to his followers—and that the sharp division between those who live by the flesh and those who live by the spirit had better be made now, in these days that are now upon us.

Outside the church are powerful systems which call men to supreme loyalty to a state, a social system, a flag or a ruler. In Germany they say with utter frankness: "The old idea of freedom which you hold in America with its insistence on freedom of religion, press, assembly, speech—that is outmoded, outdated fifty years. We have a new idea, the freedom to adore the leader, and that leader is Hitler." Visitors find his picture in every public place and even above the altar in some Christian churches—this Hitler, whose word is not the word of a gentleman, whose cruelty is the most terrible scourge in world history, and who considers his own people as pawns to be sacrificed on the chessboard of world conflict. There can be no compromise between the Church of Christ and the mushrooms

of political, social or economical growths which we call dictatorship. Either the one or the other must triumph.

The church believes that the way to defeat an alien idea is by force of intellect and will, by promulgating a superior idea and making it incarnate in human life.

THE SIN OF DIVISION

Powerful foes attack the Church of Christ from within. Outside are the forces of physical destruction and violence. Inside are the processes of intellectual, moral and spiritual disintegration. Our church is divided in this country into more than two hundred groups, from the high-minded Quakers on the left to the highly emotional "Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Sects" on the right. Frequently these groups have nothing in common—no fellowship, no cup of blessing, no single purpose, no world-wide program. To say that they work at cross purposes is to put it very mildly. Totalitarianism is a sin. Yes, we shudder at it—let us also be concerned about the sin of disunion. Nineteen centuries have passed since Jesus prayed that we might be one, and still we are divided. There are even twelve or fifteen classifications of blue-blooded Presbyterians. Men are lying wounded along the highway of life, but the Christian church is impotent to help them—we must wait to see which type of blood they need for transfusion—which type out of more than two hundred Protestant varieties!

We have come together as Christians into a church building to worship, praise, sing and meditate that our common belief in the Holy Catholic Church may be strengthened. In spite of the warfare without and the tumult within, we can still hear the voice of the Master saying: "Upon this rock I will build my church." He has been true to that promise. He has built his church through the ages on men confessing him to be their Lord and Master. The growth of his Kingdom has come as he said—life in a tiny seed, its silent nurture, its steady development until it has become a mighty tree. First, the confession out of a man's spiritual discernment, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God!"—then the witness to that confession—making it public, telling one's belief—then the forming of a little church in a home—the winning of converts—the sending of a missionary to a neighboring city—then the conflict with the world and the persecution of Christians, many being martyrs for their beliefs in the first century—then the scattering of the faithful and the establishment of other churches.

CHRIST BUILDING HIS CHURCH

That is the simple story of the growth of the Church of Christ. As the church has dug in on various fronts and in various parts of the world, she has taken time to train elders, deacons, ministers and evangelists. She has developed great writers who have been apologists, theologians and translators. Since the first century these men have translated portions of the Old and New Testaments into more than a thousand tongues. She has brought up reformers who have corrected abuses, revivalists who have preached with power to sinners, missionaries who have changed the spiritual climate in foreign lands, and church school teachers who have instructed children from infancy to mature life.

Yes, Christ has built his church through the years. The gospel has worked as leaven in human society and Christ has been evident in all works of grace everywhere. So far, our thought has been true, historically speaking, but our belief in the church must be expressed in the present and future as well as in the past tense. Everyone will agree that Christ has built his church. Dr. T. H. Robinson of Cardiff, Wales, makes this comment:

> Certainly, whether this prophecy be actually a word of Jesus or whether it be a later interpretation, it has been abundantly fulfilled. The great racial movements of the fifth century overthrew the political world, but the church adapted herself to the new conditions, and still went on her way. A thousand years later came that intellectual revolution which we call the Renaissance, and though it so completely uprooted the whole world of medieval thought that we today find it almost impossible to think ourselves into the position of the fourteenth century, the church found a new life, and both that portion of it which in northern Europe broke away from the main body, and those who maintained the traditional forms, won a fresh vigor and a new interpretation of Christ. The powers of Hades have not prevailed against it.

WILL OUR FAITH HOLD?

These are dark days for the Church of Christ! Will our faith hold that he will build his church today and tomorrow? Will his church stand in time of political revolution as, for example, in Russia, where atheism is the announced policy of the government? A generation of Russian youth, educated under these conditions, may be expected to be apathetic toward all religions within another half-century. What chance for the church in Russia? What chance for the church in this day of social change in America or Germany, where moral codes are being revised? Sacredness of marriage is being denied and home life is coming to mean so little to great sections of our population. Does our faith hold that the church will defend and protect the home as the basic institution in a civilized world? Ericka Mann says that the home has broken down in Germany, that men dwell together in a family unit, not as brothers and sisters but rather as aliens, sitting side by side at a common board, hanging their hats in the same place, but with no fellowship, no communion —strangers, one to the other.

Will the church be built in Germany—that great country which gave birth to Luther, stalwart Protestant who wanted every family to have a German Bible on the altar of the home? Is our faith strong enough to say that Christ will go on building his church in Europe, where a bomb smashes the priceless altar of St. Paul's in London and another sets fire to the Dom, the great Lutheran church in the heart of Berlin? What is our faith in this time of racial revolution when the dominance of the white man is presented, when the demand for racial equality is backed by competent

armaments, and when the gospel is being rejected because it is the white man's religion? Is our faith as strong as Dr. Robinson's, who thus testifies: "The Spirit of Christ, manifested not merely in individual Christians but in the community as a whole, may surely be trusted to lead the growth and development of the body in whom he dwells, till the latter becomes an expression, in the material sphere and on the earthly plane, of that Kingdom which is not made with hands but is eternal in the heavens."

These questions and problems affect people in different ways. Some leave the church—deserters from a sinking ship. Many who have profited from the church in the community pass her by—parasites harmful to the life of the church. Others stand around, waiting for the church to die—they are afflicted with a disease which we call spectatoritis. Still others work from within to spread discord and confusion. They are the traitors to the Christian enterprise. It is like the parable of the sower: Jesus did not say that all of the seeds fell on good ground and produced a hundred fold, but he did say that some seed fell on good ground and bore fruit. This good seed on good ground is the foundation of the Christian church. "These are they who have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb." These are the redeemed of the Lord. These are the good and true Christian folks who are today reasserting their faith—*"Christ will build his church."*

We base our belief in the church on what the churches at their best are trying to say.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

The first word is a word for the unity of the Christian church. It is a strange fact that, just at the moment when the church was making great steps forward along this path, the Second World War should break out in all its fury in Europe and the Japanese should be in the midst of their campaign in China. Nevertheless, churchmen from every Protestant denomination—and with Catholic observers—did meet in London, Oxford and Edinburgh in the summer of 1937, and a thousand young people from all Protestant groups did meet in Holland in the summer of 1939, marking a great step in the understanding of our differences and in the determined resolution to specialize in agreement, rather than disagreement. The church is trying to say today that in Christ is the only hope for the salvation of the world; that in Christ all men are brothers. The church reads again the high priestly prayer of Jesus and makes it her own:

> Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

The church is reasserting that Christ is building his church today on the rock of a man's confession. The individual believer is never lost, separate, alone. He belongs to the invisible Church of Christ, to a world-wide fellowship. He may be living in a country where the spiritual structure is being torn down and trampled under hobnailed boots; still he is a member of the Christian church and, even in the midst of persecution and death, Christ will build his church. The church is asking the question, "What shall it profit a man, a city or a nation, to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" The church is saying that death is not the end of life, but an experience in life; that life goes on beyond the grave, lives on, loves on, and conquers

HERBERT BEECHER HUDNUT

still. The church is also bringing out of the dust of the ages some of the great thoughts which men have had. The church says to men: "Reaffirm your belief in these great ideas. Let them become part of your moral and spiritual fiber. Give your allegiance to these ideas and see if a new society does not grow up around you, a society committed once again to high and noble living on a plane with Jesus of Nazareth."

> He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:8).
>
> Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48).
>
> Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33).
>
> Pure religion and undefiled before God and the father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27).

We base our belief in the church on the goal which she is seeking to reach. The Oxford Conference in 1937 said: "The church is a new creation of God which was founded at the Last Supper. The church is a spiritual fellowship and communion of those who have found a new spring of life and power by the impact of the Christian message, who are eager to join together as a living, growing body of believers, through whom the ideals and spirit of Christ can be transmitted and his principles of life promoted. Her goal is the progressive realization of the Kingdom in the world."

THE CHURCH'S FINAL GOAL

No one will ever think of a goal which is more inclusive or compelling than this. Jesus used it as the objective of his life. It drew him out of a carpenter shop and sent him along the highways of life, ministering to travelers along the way. He talked with them about God's Kingdom and tried to make it so real that they would want to be citizens of it. He told stories about it which made men desire it as the pearl of great price. He lived according to the Kingdom's code in a world which knew many baser ones. But, above all, he was Lord in that Kingdom. His constant work was to enlarge it. His every prayer was for it. His followers were brought into it and made to realize that the Kingdom of God was not some far-off divine event toward which creation was moving, but a very present spiritual state in which every man should move and have his being.

"The Kingdom of God is within you," said Jesus—within men as individuals and within them as a human society. Now the Kingdom of God and the Church of Christ should be synonymous terms. They are identical in ultimate purpose—the Kingdom is God's promise for his children, the church is the divine organization of men groping their way toward that Kingdom, but helped on their way by every heavenly impulse, by every holy prayer and by the Son of God who knew what was in heaven and earth when he said, "I will build my church."

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE CHURCH

We believe in the church because of her determination. The first disciples set out to win the world for Christ and, ever since, that has been the determined effort of the church. Today every church in Detroit, and Pittsburgh, and Springfield, and all over this country is going forward trying to form the solid body of a church constituency that goes to church for education and worship, and then goes out into the larger community to serve—doing all of this devotedly, constantly and enthusiastically. The church is still very much of a minority movement in a pagan world, but she is sticking to her task with dogged perseverance.

It is a good thing to see this determination coming back to the Christian mind. The first century political oppressionists knew that Christians had to be killed, that they would not compromise or bow the knee to Baal. We have just ended a period in church history when the membership of the church has been lukewarm. Members whose religious interests have not been eager or enduring have diluted the message of the church. Too often Christians have been characterized by an easygoing lethargy, unwilling to put themselves out in any Kingdom endeavor. When the call for service has come, they have replied: "Here am I, Lord—send George!"

Church interest has been largely directed to keeping wheels turning, or to backslapping or to moral insensitivity. That time has gone. There is today a great concern in the Church of Christ for the spiritual growth and moral discipline of the membership. The church is determined to confront men with the judgments of God on our personal and social character and institutions. The gospel is at sword's points with the popular materialistic philosophy. The church is insistent in her efforts to develop the Christian conscience, so that Christian men will know the right and follow it in every field of human enterprise. We agree that: "Christianity is a faith to be followed—it is also a deed to be done. Christianity is a philosophy to be believed—it is also a service to be achieved."

A SOURCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

And, finally, we believe in the church because of the encouragement which she brings to us. First of all, the encouragement of freedom. The Old Testament tells us that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." We say today that where the Spirit of Christ is, there is freedom. The spirit of freedom is in man and cannot be crushed. He is a free agent who recognizes God as the highest authority and, in the Church of Christ, men become free—free from the bondage of the law, free from the world, free from evil passion, free from the opinions of men, free from the fear of death. The church is the standard bearer of freedom, witnessing to a Power above the world, telling men that they have absolute freedom before God and that nothing may come between God and their own souls.

The church also gives us the encouragement of love. No one who has read the twenty-first chapter of St. John will ever forget the scene by the seashore where Jesus asked Peter about his love. Peter had not forgotten the time when he denied Jesus three times before the crucifixion. Neither had he forgotten the many times when he had misunderstood his Lord and Master. During the weeks after the crucifixion, Peter had had ample opportunity to go over all of his past mistakes in his own mind. During those days Peter had stored up many questions which he wanted to ask Jesus when he should meet him again—questions about the organization of the church, about the brethren, about politics, about social welfare, about slavery, poverty and war. These were important questions and Peter wanted the answers as he went out to help build and establish churches. Peter was living in very troubled days and especially so since his Lord had been crucified. Peter felt that he must have the answers, or he would be unable to carry on.

Now, go in your imagination to that seashore with Peter and sit down at the feet of the Master. Listen to Jesus' thrice repeated question: "Simon, Son of John, lovest thou me?" Then watch the effect on the

impetuous Peter. Notice that the questions which were on his lips have not been asked. They have faded away into oblivion. Instead of exact formulas, Jesus has given Peter the greatest encouragement which he is able to give—the love which passes all understanding. Sometimes we are like that—we want specific answers to all of the world's problems and we carry these worries and responsibilities and troubles about on our shoulders. Perhaps we need to take some time off and go to some quiet place and there sit down at the feet of Jesus and let him talk to us again of his loving assurance.

There is also the encouragement of faith. Mr. T. S. Eliot, in his great religious play called "The Rock," speaks of the encouragement that comes to men—even in these desperate days—from the unseen hosts of God, the invisible choir of heaven: "We shall stand beside you for a moment, visible and again invisible. . . . Until your foundations are made firm, until your walls are built, and your roof tree set. . . . Until your altar is dressed and the sanctuary."

Yes, the Living Christ is abreast of all the centuries. Listen to him as he says, "I will build my church." Above the tumult and the shouting, over the exploding of torpedoes and bombs, in spite of the noise of cities, and above the confusion and cries of race and clan, in the tempest of wrath—the Living Christ speaks to the world in confidence—"I will build my church."

It cannot be seriously disputed that one was born 1900 years ago who has changed the course of human events. His birth marked the change of the world's calendar—symbol of a new beginning in the life of mankind. Every letter that is written, every legal and state document in its date bears silent testimony to the stupendous fact that the birth of Christ was the beginning of a new era. The name of Jesus has been chiseled into institutions more enduring than monuments of bronze or shafts of granite.

Another fact equally notable is, that the quality of Jesus' life set up an imperial standard of character and released a new force for the betterment and enrichment of men's lives. We have not only reckoned events from his birthday, but we have reckoned human values by a new standard and have measured character and achievement by a new yardstick. Men have been motivated and moved by a new spirit; his truths have opened to them new vistas of happiness and hope.

The Christmas story flowers into the narrative of a life whose transcendent quality was its creative beauty. Jesus' recognition of the loveliness of childhood, his respect for womanhood, his gentleness with the poor and afflicted make up a character of matchless beauty and charm.

The fact of Bethlehem is to be exploited for the salvation of mankind. From the glory of Bethlehem to the task of Capernaum: "He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me . . . to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

George Richmond Grose.

'In the Wilderness, Make Straight the Way'

By Oliver J. Hart

John the Baptist said, I am the voice of one crying. In the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord. John 1:23.

This is a quotation from the third verse of the fortieth chapter of Isaiah. The punctuation indicated is that suggested by Dean Inge. It may not be good exegesis, but it is very suggestive. There might not be much sense in crying in the wilderness when there is no one to hear, but it is a very profound spiritual truth that in the wilderness we must make ready and prepare the way of the Lord.

We are told that John the Baptist was in the desert until the day of his showing unto Israel. On that day we find him coming out of the desert experience with a point of view about life unlike that of other men. He possessed that quiet underlying composure which comes from vital communion with God. When the people began to come to him, he told them not to stay in the desert, but to go back to their daily tasks with a new spirit. He told the soldiers to go back and avoid violence and to be content with their wages. He told the publicans to go back and not to collect more taxes than were due. He said to the Pharisees and the Sadducees, "Bring forth fruit meet for repentance." He made it plain that they could not count on special privileges because they were sons of Abraham. The Messiah's Kingdom was to be based upon repentance and amendment of life. If they would understand the Messiah when he came, they must change their whole way of thinking. John foresaw that with their present attitude they would reject the Messiah—and they did.

That is just what will happen this Christmas. The Christ child will come, and many will not understand.

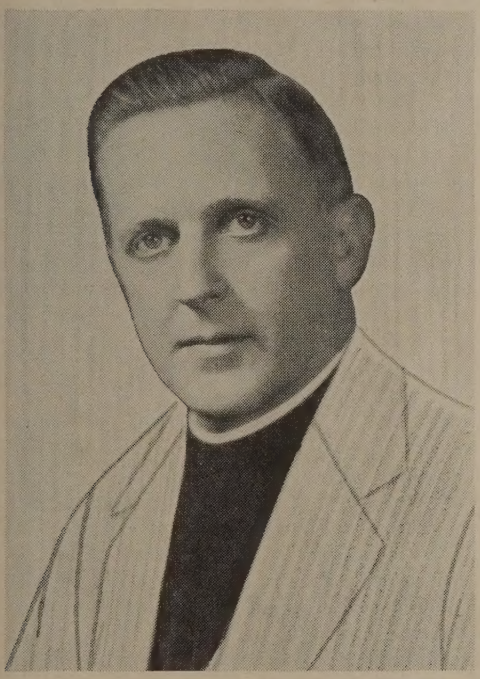
MODERN SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

We must recognize that there are a great many people in the world today (and I think that many of them have just cause) who think that we who are in the church are like the scribes and the Pharisees, that we are interested in small things and have forgotten the weightier matters—the law, judgment, mercy and faith. A correspondent said, in a recent letter, that he felt somewhat stifled and caged in church. "The round of petty calls, the stodgy society, the worn-out routine of things hold no allure. The whole church must be basically torn to pieces before we can have a more vital creation of the Spirit." A great many people share this writer's point of view.

Dr. Frederick Grant, professor of New Testament at Union Theological Seminary, wrote: "The practical problems of the present cannot be adequately solved, they cannot be seriously helped, if religious disunity is to continue and increase. A divided church cannot do much for a divided society. The taunt will

surely be flung at it—and in this case justly—'Physician, heal thyself!' How can men take seriously, on the subject of political unity, the advice of an institution—the Christian church—which itself illustrates utter disunity, sectarian rivalry, mutual antagonism, bigotry, intolerance, exclusiveness? I do not say this is an entirely fair view of the church; but it is what a good many persons think of the church; and the truth is bad enough, even though it does not go quite this far."

The whole point of the above quotations is that they are statements which were made by men who love the church intensely. A person who does not care about the church would never worry because the



Oliver J. Hart

church is not doing what it ought to be doing as the Body of Christ. "The church is all right. It was there the last time I went, and will probably be there the next time I care to go." Such would be their indifferent comment. But when someone cares for the church intensely, he wants it to be worthy of its divine heritage.

As we prepare for Christmas, may we not think of these words of John the Baptist: "In the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord." And may they arouse in us a desire to eliminate all pettiness and indifference in church affairs and measure up to the real and high concerns of life.

RELIGION AND LIFE

When I was a student at Union Seminary, Professor McGiffert, a great teacher, talked to us about the value of seminars in a parish similar to the seminars in our universities. Such a seminar in a parish church could be a tremendous influence. Professor McGiffert said: "They need to discuss the questions of human life and destiny; the spiritual interpretation of the world in which we live; the possibility of believing in God at all in such a world as this; the reality of human freedom and responsibility; the validity of religious and moral values; the nature of a Christlike ideal and its practicality in this modern, materialistic, mechanistic age. If the church is to regain any measure of its one-time leadership, it must grapple with living problems which made a difference in the life of the world. Not that it should deal with all the passing questions of the day. Many of them it may best leave severely alone, but it should concern itself above all else with the great underlying principles upon which all life will ultimately be built for good or for ill."

College students are tempted to be theoretical in their outlook, but if the keenest and ablest of our parishioners would meet in a seminar to discuss the matters that Professor McGiffert outlined, the church could have a much more vital influence. Such a seminar would not be academic because we could measure our discussions and test our values in the light of our daily lives.

The battle today is no longer between Protestantism and Catholicism. Certainly it is no longer between various denominations. It is not even between Christians and Jews. The question today is whether or not it is possible to have a spiritual life at all. Is man a child of God with an eternal destiny, or is he a high-grade animal who is merely to live on this earth for a few years and then be cast out like a dead dog? The answer which the Christ child gives to that question is that we are all children of God and that God is love. The world does not believe it, or we would not be reading such ghastly news as we have been reading during the past months.

HEARING THE ANGELS SING

If we are ever to understand the Christmas message, we must *want* to understand it. If we want to know what our duties are as members of the church, we simply turn to the Prayer Book, and there the answer is clear and explicit: "My bounden duty is to follow Christ, to worship God every Sunday in his church; and to work, to pray and to give for the spread of his Kingdom." If we have a genuine desire to know what our obligations and privileges are as members of the Christian church, we can understand them. In the same way, if we want to know what it means to pray, we must want to understand prayer. We can read all the best books in the world on prayer and never come within hailing distance of its meaning unless we really want to pray. We can go through this Christmas season and never hear an angel sing.

Of all the Christmas stories, one that I love very much is that of Simeon. Simeon had been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and in Hebrew "waiting for" is not a passive word. It means twisting or stretching. Simeon had been stretching his soul before God, and when the Christ child came, he recognized him and said: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen

thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people."

Material forces press upon us very insidiously today and make us unaware of the spiritual. There is danger that the abundance of material things which surround us will smother the finer possibilities of life. Unless we approach life with that resolute fixing of our attention upon things that are eternal and unchanging, we shall fail to see the meaning of Christmas. From time to time we meet men and women who have about them that underlying certainty of spiritual reality which comes from vital communion with God. These are the people who see beneath the surface to the real meaning of the Christmas season.

If we make proper preparation in the wilderness, our ears will not be stopped and our eyes will not be blinded, and we shall see the Christ child in his coming. I have the feeling that we reach our best at Christmas. We are freed from so many of the petty and selfish things that grip us most of the year. If we ever hear angels sing, we hear them at Christmas in the voice of a Child. The best moments that we shall have during this Christmas will be the most real of our lives.

I saw a stable low and very bare;
A little child in a manger—
The oxen near Him had Him in their care,
But to men He was a Stranger;
The safety of the world was lying there—
And also the world's danger.

In our human fashion we are perhaps not to be blamed if we rejoice that our friends remember us with gifts. To be appreciated and recalled by others is a sweet and blessed thing. But there is another side to the shield which says we may be richly blest if we see in Christmas a time for losses as well as for gains. There is always an accumulating process in life that needs to be renovated to its original simplicity. We shall not enjoy life in its gracious foundation-aspects until we rid it of its mass of useless accretions and additions. Deep within us is the wish not to be loaded with more things, but to be unloaded of the heaped-up burden we already carry.

There is one aspect of Jesus' life that shines with full light on our world today. There is one great burden that he would not carry, and his refusal to carry it makes him unique. It will be a great Christmas gift if we can discover from him a part at least of his secret. It was a secret not of gain but of loss; loss of something that he might have had, for a time at least, but which he discarded.

The world's chief cause of unrest and misery today is its desire for greatness. That burden, Jesus would not carry! The greatness of Jesus lies in his refusal to be great! Trace the source of most of our unhappiness today. The trail leads back to our wish for reputation, publicity, prominence, men's praises, fame. It was just this that Jesus repudiated and refused! He made his greatness to consist of a loss of self so ultimate and decisive that history turned to behold the miracle. And then it crowned him!

George Lawrence Parker.

What Think Ye of Christ?

By W. B. Selah

Some people do not think of him at all. They simply ignore him. They spend their lives as though he had never lived and taught and died on their behalf.

How tragic it is! For tragedy is not always something that happens to us; often it is something that fails to happen to us. The tragedy of those who never think of Christ lies in what they miss. He offers them his gracious comradeship. But since they will not think of him, they miss it. He offers them strength for their weakness, beauty for their ashes, peace for their distraction. But they never think of him, so they miss all that. He would enter their lives not to rob, but to enrich; not to limit, but to liberate. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me." He offers a spiritual banquet, but since they will not even think of him, they condemn themselves to spiritual starvation. They drift on, all unconscious of the fact that they have missed the path of life. And that is tragic.

I

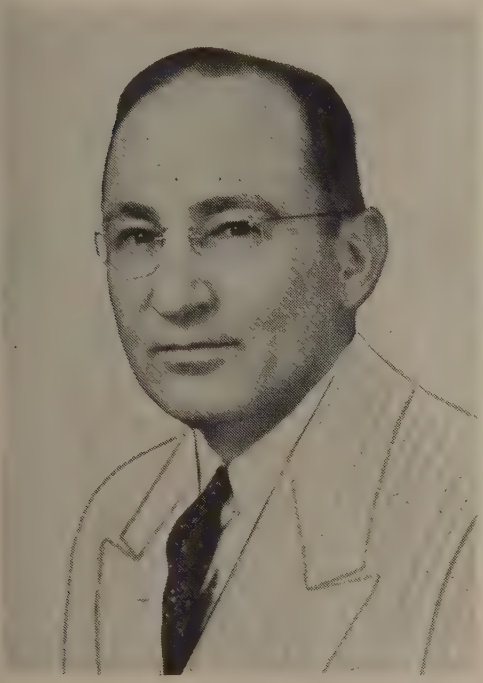
What think ye of Christ? Some people think that he is a weakling. They have come under the spell of certain artists who have pictured him as a pale and emaciated figure with a halo about his head. But the artists had no warrant for such a portrayal. There is not the slightest thread of evidence, either in the New Testament or out of it, to show what Jesus looked like. The artists all dipped their brushes in their imaginations.

Certainly there is no evidence for thinking that Jesus was a weakling. When we open the New Testament we find that the men who came in contact with him were impressed not with his weakness but with his strength. John the Baptist was a forceful personality. He dared rebuke Herod for a public indecency, and he challenged the politicians of Jerusalem. What did John the Baptist think of Jesus? Pointing to Jesus, he said, "There cometh one mightier than I." One day Jesus asked his disciples what men thought of him. Peter, answering for the rest, said that some men thought that he resembled Elijah. Now Elijah was regarded as one of the mightiest prophets of ancient Israel. He was the prophet who defied Ahab the king, when that monarch robbed a peasant of his farm. He was the prophet who single-handed routed the false prophets of Baal. The men of Jesus' day must have been impressed with his power else they would not have likened him to the mighty Elijah. What impression did Jesus make on the rulers of Jerusalem? They were afraid of him. Caiphas and the high priests were so afraid of his mighty influence that they plotted his death. Pilate, clothed with all the power of the Roman empire, trembled before him.

It is clear that the men who met Jesus were impressed with his strength.

When Jesus spoke, men were deeply stirred. Some were stirred to hate him; others were moved to love him with an undying love. When he preached he created either a riot or a revival. His word was with power. It was not rose water; it was dynamite. It blew up old prejudices and traditions. It shook the social order of his day to its very foundations. Only a strong, dynamic personality can do that.

And his words have become the moral standard of our day. True, we honor his teaching more in the breach than in the performance. Nevertheless, his words



W. B. Selah

haunt us and make us feel uneasy. He has become the conscience of mankind. In our best moments we feel that we ought to order our lives and build our civilization upon his teaching. When we consider the storms that have swept across the world, when we think of all the empires that have come and gone since Jesus taught in that obscure corner of the Roman empire nineteen centuries ago, it is amazing that men today should still be feeling the impact of his influence. Surely no weakling could cast such a spell upon the ages. Only a personality of titanic proportions could do that.

In a profound sense Jesus is the world's greatest conqueror. Alexander the Great changed the map of the world; Jesus has changed the motives of men. Caesar pushed back a frontier; Jesus has purified and enlarged the faith of mankind. Charlemagne carved out a kingdom for himself; Jesus laid the foundation of the Kingdom of God—a kingdom of justice and truth and brotherhood. Striding across the centuries like a mighty moral huntsman, Jesus prods men out of their little burrows of respectability and conventionality, and challenges their little moral codes with the splendor of his idealism. After nineteen centuries he is still converting stagnant swamps into fragrant gardens, and altering the moral climate of the world.

Forget the unwarranted pictures of the artists; forget the saccharine phrases of the sentimental evangelists; strip from him the false robes woven by dry-as-dust dogmatists, and Jesus stands forth a regal and commanding figure.

II

What think ye of Christ? There are people who consider him a menace to life. Does that strike you as strange? It need not, for he was so considered by the ecclesiastical politicians of his day. Why did they crucify him? Well, they did not crucify him because he went about preaching on the goodness of God. They did not crucify him for proclaiming the golden rule. They did not crucify him because he held up sublime ideas of heaven. They crucified him because he was a menace to their inhuman and unjust methods of making money and using power. He overturned the tables of the money changers. He challenged the temple graft. He rebuked the bigoted patriotism of his day. He ridiculed the straitlaced creeds that the religious leaders tried to fasten upon men. He threatened the vested interests of the ruling classes who were exploiting the poor and seeking to make piety a substitute for justice. So they slew him.

And Jesus is still a menace to many of our ways of making money and using power. Think what a revolution would take place if he really ruled our lives and dominated our civilization! If he ruled, man's inhumanity to man would cease. If he ruled, the war system, which is a barbarous method of settling disputes by slaughtering boys, would be discarded. If he ruled, that narrow brand of nationalism which puts the economic welfare of one nation above the interests of the rest of mankind would have to go. If he ruled, our racial prejudices would be regarded as hideously immoral.

Yes, Jesus is a menace—to everything that is inhuman, and brutal, and unjust in our world. But if he is a menace to everything that blights life, he is, by the same token, the champion of everything that blesses it. He inspires and reinforces those who dare battle for a better world. He encourages men to perform deeds of love and charity. To every soul that seeks to lift the world a little closer to right and brotherhood he says, "Inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these ye do it unto me."

III

In answer to the question, "What think ye of Christ?" there are some who would say that he is out-of-date. His way of life and his teaching may have suited the first century, they say, but he can have no helpful word for the twentieth century with its baffling and complicated problems. "Times have changed," they say. His civilization was pastoral; ours is industrial. His civilization was Oriental; ours is Occidental. His

civilization knew no science; this is the scientific age. Life was simple then; now it is complex. What has he to offer us? Why should we follow him? Thus a great many moderns are talking.

But, after all, only the external aspects of life have changed. Times have changed, but human nature has not changed. If Jesus had anything helpful to say to human nature in the first century, it is still valid for the twentieth century. If he could help men to find God and to live for unselfish purposes in his day, he could do it now if we would order our lives by his spiritual insights.

The laws by which men grow to maturity have not changed. Here is a mother with her baby boy, riding across the country in a transcontinental plane. Yonder in ancient Palestine a mother rides into Jerusalem on a donkey with her infant son in her arms. What a difference! But the difference is only in external conditions. The modern baby travels faster, but he does not grow any faster. He will not reach maturity a day sooner than did the boy of the long ago. And he will arrive at maturity by the same processes and laws of growth, physical, mental, spiritual, that boys grew by in ancient Jerusalem. Times have changed, but the laws for growing men have not altered one whit. And here is my point. If Jesus, in the first century, knew the laws by which development is achieved, those laws are still valid for the twentieth century.

Once more; times may have changed, but sin has not changed. It has changed its clothes, but not its character. Today, as in the time of Pharaoh, men follow a low ideal when a higher is possible, and that is sin. Today, as in the day of Joseph, jealousy sells men into slavery. The apostle Paul said that the love of money is the root of all evil. He felt that greed was the curse of his day. Well, is it not the curse of our day, too? Behind most of the crime and graft and conflict of our time is the love of money. Greed still blinds men to the glory of God and the beauty of brotherhood.

One day Jesus met Zaccheus who on his own confession was a greedy and unjust man. When Jesus finished with Zaccheus, he was saying: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." The greedy man became generous, the unjust man just. And Jesus did it. And this Jesus who broke the power of sin in men's lives in the long ago can do it now, if we will open our hearts to his cleansing grace.

No, Jesus is not out-of-date. He still marches ahead, and his challenge to us is, "Follow me."

IV

What think ye of Christ? I think that he is our only hope of a better world. Unless we build upon his principles and spirit, we build in vain. As Lloyd George once said, "Now it is either Christ or chaos."

The exposition which was held in Chicago a few years ago was called "A Century of Progress." As someone has said, "The hundred years which came in in 1832 and went out in 1932 came in on horseback and went out in an airplane; it came in lighted by a tallow candle and went out illuminated by electricity; it came in with man pushing a quill pen and went out with man using a power press; it came in with man speaking as did his cave-man ancestors and went out with man standing before a microphone; it came in with man making things by hand (the word 'manufacture' comes from the Latin word *manus*, 'by hand'), and it went out with man making things *en masse* by power machinery."

Truly, that was a century of great progress in material achievements. But did we make any progress in the art of living together? We improved the means by which we live. Did we improve the ends for which we live? Well, that boasted century of progress witnessed the most savage and devastating war in the annals of mankind; a war in which we dug ten million graves and put into them the flower of Western civilization; a war that cost one hundred and eighty-six billion dollars; a war that left a trail of hate and despair and cynicism across the earth. Then swiftly following upon the heels of that war, like a Nemesis, came the worst depression our world has known; a depression that engulfed both victor and vanquished.

Obviously something was wrong! Thoughtful men are saying that our trouble was that our material progress had outstripped our moral and spiritual growth. Science had taught us how to get what we want in the realm of things, but we did not know what we ought to want in the realm of social well-being. Science had created plenty of horse power, but we lacked moral power to use it for constructive ends, so we used it to destroy. Science built tall buildings, but we did not have enough high-minded men to do business in them; so we fell into the depression.

And what of the future? Will the old savage wreck the new civilization as he almost wrecked it in 1914? That depends upon his moral guides. If he continues to follow pagan teachers, the future is dark indeed. If he listens to the apostles of force and bloody imperialism, he may pull down the pillars of civilization.

Isn't it about time we tried the way of Christ? It may be as Charles Ellwood suggests: "A Christian world is not only practicable; in the long run it will be found that no other world is practicable." We have tried hate, and the result has been disaster. Why not try love? We have tried the pagan doctrine of every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost, and the devil *has*. Why not try cooperation and good will? Unless the old savage can be converted to the principles of Jesus, he will destroy the new civilization which scientific progress has created—he will perhaps destroy even himself.

V

What think ye of Christ? He is the highest revelation of the nature and will of God that we have.

One day the artist Rubens went to visit a friend in his office, but the friend was not in. After waiting awhile Rubens took a pencil and sketched a picture on a piece of paper, put the paper on his friend's desk, and left the office. When his friend came in, he picked up the sketch, studied it carefully a minute and said: "Ah,

Rubens has been here. Nobody else could draw like hat."

As I see Jesus Christ lifting men above pettiness and anity and selfish purposes, as I see him taking the oison of bitterness from those who have suffered great oss, as I see him healing the brokenhearted and giving ourage to those who must face death, as I see him lrawing men up to new levels of moral and spiritual chievement, I say, God is in Christ. Nobody else ould draw like that. God is in him, for he does God's vork in the world.

So to our wondering eyes subdued,
Flesh-veiled but not concealed:
We find in Christ the Fatherhood
And heart of God revealed.

Christ or Expediency?

By Albert R. Phillips

LAST July 4 marked the 164th birthday of the United States. As we look back over the past we ee 164 years of growth—growth that has been geo- raphical, material, mechanical, economic, social and ultural. From a simple society of 3,000,000 people we ave become a vastly complex nation of 130,000,000 eople. Very little of our former simplicity is left; we re now a huge and intricate organism that has built p an equally involved machinery by which our daily ves are continually affected.

This country began out of a tragedy and this year it tands with the specter of tragedy hovering over and bout it. One of the most tragic dangers that we face, as M. R. Eiselen in his *Our Martial Mythology* suggests, that we may allow this great twentieth century ma- hinery of our civilization to be controlled by a 1776 nind, or worse than that, by a medieval mind. I refer, f course, to the part we are going to permit war to play n the preservation of our nation and world and of its berties and freedoms. We won our freedom, we sup- ose, by means of war, and there are vast numbers of eople who do not stop to think that there may be an- ther way to achieve our ends besides war. They take it or granted that war is the only possible expression of he national will, and they seem unwilling to explore the ossibilities of any other course. Indeed, there are some vho say that it is dangerous to think, and even that ve have no right to think of anything that is opposed o the opinion of those who accept the traditional nodes of thought and action. But days do come when ve have to think, and I believe that now is one of hose times when we must think—deeply and sincerely.

CONVICTIONS THAT COST

This problem raised by the spread of war in the vorld is one that has been very much on my mind, as t has been on yours. I have been criticized for bringing t up so often; and I have been criticized and scorned for what I believe to be Christian views. Would these people have me remain silent about one of the most pressing of our social problems, in which the soul of every last one of us is involved? On a previous occasion I have said that I do not relish the task of taking the stand that I do and the responsibility of declaring it; but that responsibility is mine, and I cherish it as vital to my own soul and self-respect. It is my firm conviction, as a result of my study of the New Testament and of history, that war is not the only way out of our deplorable situation. I am equally convinced that the United States has a chance such as no other nation on the face of the earth has ever had: the chance to show to the world a new way; and because it does have this chance, it is America's responsibility to take advantage of it and pay the price of peace—which it can pay, by virtue of its material resources, its situation between two great oceans, and its idealism: all of which must be considered as gifts entrusted to it by God.

One of the difficulties of the situation is that, although we all seem to desire peace, we have different ways of going after it. It is the same way with our liberty, which has always been claimed sacred by all Americans. Most of us have a pretty good idea of what freedom is, but there are those who are fostering a certain brand of what they call patriotism, which in the end eclipses liberty. To them patriotism is waving the flag and saluting it in the accepted fashion, and singing the national anthem—which is nothing more than a war song—making fetishes of our symbols of liberty; and when they try to enforce a stereotyped observance of patriotic etiquette, they deny liberty and freedom. So it is with peace. Some still want to gain peace by non-peaceful means. More than that, there are different reasons why people want peace. Some want an absence of war so that they can carry on their own selfish enterprises to their hearts' content. Others want peace so that they can help build a finer world for all the people who live in it.

SELF-INTEREST OR SERVICE?

Here, then, are the alternatives from which our nation must choose: peace by peaceful means or a phantom peace by means of war. To which voice shall the nation listen? "To the voice of history, with its grim story of the cost, the futility, the growing deadliness of war? Or to the voice of the militarist, still wedded to the outworn formula that might makes right?"* Will America follow the way of expediency and self-interest or the path of service and unselfishness?

For us to preach individual unselfishness and national selfishness would indicate a failure to understand the full scope of our Christianity which teaches unselfishness. That would be a double standard entirely inconsistent with real Christianity. Under it the government may become an overlording state which assumes rights which go directly against the rights of individuals. Being allowed the right to deny the rights of individuals, the state then assumes the power to deny our personal liberties for the sake of so-called national self-interest. That is not a liberty which the state has the right to take; in fact, it is license, and

*M. R. Eiselen: *Our Martial Mythology* (Living Issues Leaflet, American Baptist Publication Society).

that is not in the interest of national welfare. It is easy enough to see what this sort of thing leads to; Europe is a glaring example of what it does to people, their culture, their civilization and their liberties. The outcome can only be destruction, after which the survivors must go through the process of rebuilding, while at the same time trying to care for the human wrecks of this curse which our governments so painfully and tragically try to glorify.

The most important factor involved in the nation's choice of the course which it is to pursue is going to be what our Christian church members will do about this business. So we have now to ask the question as to the basis on which Christians will make their decisions in this as in all social questions. Will we make up our minds on the basis of our understanding of Jesus Christ, or will we follow the dictates of expediency? Will Jesus master us or will self-interest? These are our alternatives: Christ or expediency.

THE TEST OF OUR CHRISTIANITY

The choice which we make will show how far our Christianity has progressed, or how deeply into our lives it has been able to penetrate—how much of ourselves we have been willing to surrender to him whom we call Savior and Master. There is a reason why the Christian minister must preach with purpose now as never before, and there is a reason why Christians should be in God's house for Christian worship with regularity. That reason is that the strength of the people must be bolstered in the time of crisis; they must be encouraged and led that they may be enabled to make right decisions, and that they may be able to live their lives in a conscious fellowship with Almighty God and Jesus Christ, his Son, who alone can save us and our horribly sinful world.

We are bound by virtue of our Christian vows and faith to make Christian decisions. We must be unafraid of allowing our insights to be deepened so that we may be able to know, to the best of our ability, what is a Christian decision in this our sinful world. If we who call ourselves Christians cannot take a Christian stand against such glaring evils as we face today what judgment will the future cast upon us?

The question is this: Are we willing to follow out the logical consequences of a true Christian faith? Are we able to listen to Jesus and believe him when he says: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

YE ARE WITNESSES—MARTYRS!

These are difficult words, yet they embody the idea for which Jesus called upon his disciples to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. And it was his faith in this way of life that led Jesus to the cross. He said, "We are witnesses of these things." I should like to have you note that the Greek word which we translate "witness" is also the root of our English word "martyr"—which gives a far wider meaning to the word "witness" than we may have been giving to it. Yet that is just the kind of witnesses for Christ which thousands of the early Christians were: martyrdom is the extreme to which Christians may yet have to go once more.

Allan Hunter, writing of George Lansbury, Christian British labor leader and worker for peace, says: "His parting word to me before he set out on a new embassy of reconciliation to the heads of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Hungary was this: 'Always the devil comes to us in extraordinary ways, asking us to be "practical," that is, to take the easy course, to follow along with the majority. For three centuries the church never agreed to that. It was persecuted. Christians were thrown to the lions. But they stood fast. If the church were to stand fast today it would help the world. To your friends in America who want a message from me I send my love and my sincere prayer and hope that you stand firm and always believe that Jesus was right. You cannot cast out evil by evil. Remember: hatred means death; love is eternal.' "

Love is eternal because love is of God and God is eternal. What greater grounds do you want or need for your faith in the Christian way? Love is the way of the Kingdom of God: it is the attitude which Jesus teaches us. It is the power of God working through those who take Christ at his word and try to be his witnesses. It is a force strong enough so that it does not need any other force to protect it. That means that there can be no hope for our Christianity if we try to save it by the sin of force, murder and destruction.

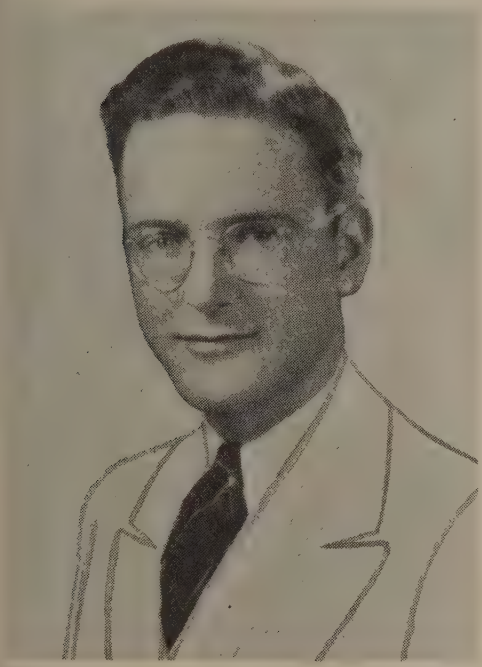
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CROSS

The *Massachusetts Baptist Bulletin* (June 1940) says: "The Kingdom of God never has been and never can be advanced by hate. The primal fact of Christianity is that God is love. The two basic laws of the Kingdom of God are love for God and love for man. The symbol of Christianity is a cross, which stands not for a theological dogma, but for a universal fact as eternal and unchangeable as God—the fact of redemptive love. Let anyone deny that fact by hatred and he assaults the citadel of God. Nobody can destroy the Kingdom of God except the members of the Kingdom. They can destroy it by being untrue to it. Conquest does not destroy the Kingdom. It was to a conquered nation in exile that the promise of the Messiah first appeared. It was to a conquered nation writhing under the heel of a military oppressor that the Messiah and the gospel finally came. God's Kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. It will last as long as its members will maintain it by spiritual means."

Perhaps you think that you would not be able to take the way of the cross in your life: you would not have the necessary strength. That kind of life, you say, is only for exceptional people like Peter and Paul, Martin Luther, Adoniram Judson and Martin Niemöller. If Jesus did not mean that his call and challenge were to be taken up by ordinary men he would never have given it: and, besides, all these men whom

I have mentioned had no more exceptional opportunities for greatness than you have: some of them had less. "No one," says Henry Hitt Crane, "is so weak or worthless but that he can release the power of God and achieve amazing results. Planting a seed, cultivating and protecting it, he unleashes the cosmic energy that produces thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold more. Losing one's life, for His sake, he allows God to save him and through him how many others! Seeking to save his life, he loses it—and God must seek otherwhere for a co-worker."

If you try to go at life on your own, of course you cannot do anything about the world or Christianity or



ALBERT R. PHILLIPS

anything else. But if you will believe in Jesus Christ—really believe in him and his teaching about saving your life by being willing to sacrifice your life for the Kingdom of God—then the power of God will be on your side, and nothing will be able to separate you from the love of Christ, and you will join the eternal procession of those who have given all in order to build the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men everywhere.

With the world starving for an answer to its problems, what will our answer be? Will we believe that Jesus was right and maintain our Christian convictions? Or will we once more compromise with the world and deny him? Will we once more join those who have prostituted the Holy Bible to support a contention that war is right and necessary? They have twisted and torn certain passages in the Bible and have put a sword in the hands of Christ: a tank, a bomber, liquid flame in the hands of the Prince of Peace!

If we take the way of expedient self-interest and get into this war, we will be a nation of fools, and we shall deserve every misery that will come to us as a result of our having taken up the sword. What do you suppose Jesus meant when he said, "All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword"? When the war is over, there will be only one group of people who will have any right to say anything about the state of affairs: those who now say: "To hell with war; I stand with Christ and I can take no other course."

The time for a decision like that, if it is not already too late, is now. When war comes it is next to impossible to make up one's mind against it. That is why many of the Christian denominations have made provision for the registering of conscientious objectors: those who see war for what it is, those who have high ideals and hopes for their country and wish to give it the best they have, and who see that war will destroy that nation of which they are a part if the nation continues under the war system. Those who do the shooting have no monopoly on patriotism or the spirit of sacrifice. The conscientious objector wants to be as patriotic as anybody else, except that his idea of patriotism does not include mass murder and the losing of one's own soul. He wants to live and work for the best social order that it is possible for his country and the world to have; but in the pursuit of his goal, he must "obey God rather than men."

TAKING JESUS AT HIS WORD

Furthermore, the conscientious objector knows that armaments mean war. President Roosevelt admitted in one of his press conferences, that disarmament is the way to peace. Yet he is pushing billion upon billion into machines of death. The nations of Europe who were not armed in 1914 stayed out of the war. We now are not on the road to peace, and unless the people do something about the situation, the United States is going to cast itself into this sea of hell and death. The conscientious objector sees that compulsory military training will give us a nation of people trained to think only in terms of war, which is just what Europe has done to generations of its sons. Those of us who do believe in taking Jesus at his word and have registered as conscientious objectors could not look ourselves or our God in the face and advocate any of these things that are tied up with war.

Many people who say they believe in God declare that there always will be war. But, says Ernest Fremont Tittle: "To deny the possibility of peace is to deny the existence of God. To say that peace is not of the nature of things is to say that God is dead—a fact which many people do not appear to recognize. . . . To affirm the existence of God is to affirm the possibility of peace. To say that God is alive is to say that the stars in their courses are fighting against all that stands in the way of peace. A cosmic Power which human greed and folly may long resist but cannot finally defeat is sweeping war, as it swept chattel slavery, to destruction."

Christian, as you face your world and the problems of your nation, what is going to be the basis of your decisions: Christ or expediency? Will you choose Christ?

'I Have the Keys'

By Clarence E. Macartney

Fear not, I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death. Rev. 1-18.

IT was strange that John, the beloved disciple who leaned on the breast of Jesus at the Supper, should have been so afraid when he saw Christ at Patmos that he fell at his feet as one dead. And yet it was not so strange either, for the Christ whom John now saw, full of glory and awful majesty, was the King of the ages, and the Conqueror of death and hell.

John was in prison in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. On that lonely and beautiful isle, some seventy miles off the coast of Asia Minor, and today one of the disputed territories of the world, John, a prisoner, was toiling in the lead mines or the quarries. But in his exile he had not forgotten, as so many do, his Christian calendar. "He was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." And in that Spirit he had his overwhelming vision of the reigning and triumphant Christ. He heard a voice as of a trumpet, and turning saw standing in the midst of Seven Golden Candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man. "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire. His feet burned like a furnace, and his voice was as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." When John saw him he fell at his feet as dead. But the Glorious Person laid his hand upon him saying: "Fear not; I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of hell and of death."

The Bible begins at the beginning and ends at the end. It alone has the conception of a great world movement, ever proceeding, never checked or turned back, and which reaches its consummation in an age of happiness and righteousness. In the Bible we see this movement beginning to flow in the book of Genesis, and it reaches its magnificent climax in the book of Revelation.

APOCALYPTIC VISIONS

No book in the Bible has been so abused and so neglected as the book of Revelation. It has been a favorite camping ground for those who think they can write history before it has been enacted, and every great war or outbreak of violence has given men their opportunity to say just who and what is the counterpart of some flaming judgment or cruel and licentious personage which appears in the book of Revelation. At the other extreme are those who have totally neglected this book and have regarded it as a field in which it is not safe for the mind of man to wander.

Yet the book has its great purposes. It is the supplement to all else that is written in the Bible. Its strange enigmatic figures, its gorgeous phantasmagoria, its catastrophic judgments, its outpoured vials of wrath, perplex and puzzle us. We have no Rosetta Stone for clue and key to the meaning of these figures. Yet as to the great principles which this sublime book illuminates, there is no obscurity. It displays the long battle between good and evil, the triumph of Christ over all systems, and kingdoms, and persons, and demons that are opposed to him. For this reason, no one has sounded the highest note until he has echoed the trumpets of the Apocalypse, no one has stood on the highest ground until he has stood here and looked down the long corridors of time until those corridors converge in eternity. It is here that we behold the beautiful rainbow that spans the stormy sky of human history, and it is here that we listen to the melodized thunder of that great day when the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

What John saw on Patmos, and what made him tremble, was not only the historic Christ whom he had known and loved on the Syrian fields, but the eternal and triumphant Christ. This vision of the triumphant Christ was the prelude to the long and fierce battle between good and evil, between Christ and Satan, which was to ensue. The great victory that the book of Revelation predicts, and so gloriously describes, is assured because of the majesty and power of the Captain of our Salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. He tells John here that he is the Christ of history and of eternity, the Christ of the incarnation, of the atonement, of the resurrection, the Christ who lived, and was dead and is alive forevermore, and who has the keys of death and of hell. The keys are the symbol of authority and power. Conquered cities surrendered their keys to the conqueror. The key is also a symbol of comprehension and the solution of all problems, all difficulties, all mysteries. Let us see then, how, in that sense, Christ has the keys of death and of hell.

THE KEY TO HUMAN HISTORY

These great words, "I have the keys," were spoken to John for the encouragement and inspiration and comfort of a church that was in desperate conflict with the persecuting pagan empire. But they are words spoken to the church of every age. They speak today with the accents of assurance and hope to those of us who live in a time when the earth is being shaken and beasts rise out of the abyss to threaten the faith and happiness of mankind.

The Apocalypse is a supplement, and a necessary supplement, to the historical part of the Bible. We see too much, and at the same time, too little; and what we see appears to be opposed to, and stronger than, what we believe. But here in this book of Revelation the whole panorama of God's battle with evil unfolds itself. The book projects upon us the vision of the conquering Redeemer. Christ the Man of Sorrows is transformed into the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and we see that beyond, and above, and around the death-stricken order of this world stretches his everlasting Kingdom.

We do not know the meaning of the world move-

ments; but Christ does. We see the world just as a umult and chaos of forces and powers that are beyond he control and influence of good men and good prinples. But Christ is the Master of these movements nd controls them to his own great purpose. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and uman history begins and ends in him. Bewildered and onfused, and bespattered again with its own blood, umanity does not know which way to turn, or whom o follow. But Christ confronts mankind with his great vord, "I have the keys." He alone has the keys.

The politicians and the statesmen of the world, even he best and the most high-minded, do not have the eys, for they are men of like passions with ourselves. One treaty of Versailles will be followed by another, or it will have to be made by men, and with all the mperfection and blindness of mankind. The British remier, in announcing to the House of Commons that var had come, confessed that all that he had believed n and struggled for had crumbled about him. Who has he keys today? Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, Churchill? To ask that question is to answer it. All that the statesnen of the world can do, apparently, is to attempt the olden door of the future with the blood-rusted key of he past.

WHERE EDUCATION AND SCIENCE FAIL

Education does not have the key. Men once seemed o think that it did, and revenues of empires were inested in systems of education; but it appears to have nade no real contribution to the solution of the probems of mankind, which are moral, not intellectual. The only education which counts in this respect is noral and religious, and in America, and elsewhere, nat kind of education has been steadily declining. To uch a system of education the words of Christ are still pplicable: "Woe unto you, for ye have taken away the ey of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and nem that were entering in ye hindered."

Science, the knowledge of the natural world, does ot hold the key. Men once hoped that it did, and that ll else having failed, the key of science would turn the ock and admit mankind into the palace of peace and earning. But that, alas, was only an illusion. One of he most eminent of scientists, Dr. Haldane, of Camridge University, in his interesting essay, "Daedalus," fter sketching the probable triumphs of national scince, has this to say: "Far from being an isolated phenomenon, the late war may be considered as one of nose disruptive events which we may constantly expect nrough the progress of science." Science blesses with he hand and smites with the other; it leads mankind p to its Ebal and Gerizim, the Mount of Cursing and he Mount of Blessing. Today the world waits and rembles to see what new terrors science will unloose in his new war.

Statesman, philosopher, education, science—none has he keys. But Christ, who was dead and alive, and who veth forevermore, holds the keys. Is the world on the erge of a great change and breakup and catastrophe? Are the last times at hand? Who knows? In certain respects it does seem that every scheme and plan and system of government, and of education, and of organization and social life, has been tried and found wanting. But whether the world order breaks up soon, or at some most remote age and day, we know that Christ has the keys; that all proceeds according to his plan, that he is the Beginning and the End and that all shall issue at length in his everlasting Kingdom.

CHRIST AND OUR LIVES

We turn now from the troubled world scene and the problems of the world to the ever troubled sea of our own life. Christ has the key to our temptations. Great is our help, if great our need.

CLARENCE E. MACARTNEY

Christ has the key to every difficulty and perplexity of life. And how many there are! You yourself cannot solve them, nor any friend or counselor; but Christ can. He holds the key. He knows why you were put on trial, and if he does not deliver you from the trial, he will prove to you that his grace is sufficient for you.

Christ has the key to our sin. How dark and gloomy is this chamber! Who can deal with sin? Who can unlock that grim door that our sins have closed and locked against ourselves? Only Christ. Through the darkness sounds his voice, "I have the keys." By the power of his life and death he forgives our sins, washes away their stain and restores us to the family of God. The cross is God's great key with which he unlocks the door of our prison and of our guilt, and brings us into the kingdom of light and peace.

Christ has the key of death and hell, or Hades; that is, all that follows death. Think of all that death has done to the world; the antiquity of its reign, the unchallenged sweep of its universal decree and dominion.

Then how magnificent is this word of Christ, "I have the keys of death and of Hades!"

The Greeks had their own legend of the Sphinx, that monstrous chimera with the face of a woman, the feet and tail of a lion, and the wings of a bird, who, crouching by the wayside, propounded to every traveler her riddle, and when they could not guess the riddle their life was forfeited. At length Oedipus guessed the riddle, and in chagrin and anger, the Sphinx flung herself down from her mountain home and perished. Like the Sphinx of that ancient legend, cruel and inscrutable, death has crouched where the ways of life pass, and propounded her riddle, and generation after generation of travelers on the path of life, unable to solve it, have perished. Not the wisest sage or philosopher, no patriarch or prophet, poet or apostle, could solve the riddle. But one day came Christ, he that liveth and was dead, and behold, he is alive forevermore; and death's riddle was solved. "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

'FEAR NOT, I HAVE THE KEYS'

To all who believe in him Christ offers his key. But a key is of no value to you unless you use it. When Hopeful and Christian had lain for three days in despair in the dark dungeon of Giant Despair, Christian suddenly remembered that he had a key in his bosom called Promise, and with that he pulled it out of his bosom, and turned the lock in the dungeon door and they were free. You have a key. Use it!

And you who are without Christ, and without hope, what key have you? What solution have you to life's problem, life's sorrows, life's sin, life's destiny? But to you, too, Christ offers his key. "Fear not; I have the keys." Will you hear his voice? Will you turn from the wisdom of the world, which is ignorance, and from the strength of the world, which is weakness, to him who is able and willing to deliver you and to save you?

No great problem was ever rightfully solved with the instruments of prejudice and hate. The world today needs nothing so much as a baptism of truth, a breadth of understanding, and a humane tolerance. The old virtues of manhood and womanhood must be resurrected, the weakling and the tool driven from leadership. We must demand the truth and take no counterfeit, and refuse to let ourselves be swept from our feet by the waves of false propaganda that lash against us unceasingly.

In the last analysis, our country's wealth cannot be measured by its miles of railroads, its large buildings, the number of its radios, or the money in its banks. We contribute to or subtract from the civilization of today by our adherence to, or our departure from, the principles of honesty, integrity, courage, common sense and compassion, which guided our ancestors who established this country. MILLARD E. TYDINGS.

DR. L. P. JACKS once asked a schoolmaster where religion had a place in his timetable. He answered: "We teach it all day long. We teach it in arithmetic, by accuracy. We teach it in history, by humanity. We teach it in geography, by breadth of mind. We teach it in astronomy, by reverence. We teach it by kindness to animals, by courtesy to servants, by good manners to one another, and by truthfulness in all things."

A Pastoral Prayer

BY FRANK HALLIDAY FERRIS

IN Scripture and in song we have had held before our eyes the vision of a warless world. We have listened to a voice out of ancient time speaking of a day when men shall go forth with joy and be led forth with peace; when the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. For twenty-five hundred years men have cherished this vision. For twenty-five hundred years every generation has been doomed to disappointment. Ours is the most disappointed generation of all. Never has the contrast between the seer's vision and the condition of the earth been so glaring. We are heavyhearted, tempted to despair. Yet another voice speaks within us, telling us that we cannot and must not let the vision die; that because right is right and God is God, some day the dream will come true.

So in the night of the world's darkness we turn to Thee. Is not the earth Thine? Are not the souls of men in Thy keeping? We pray for the people whose lands have been ravaged, their homes made desolate; for the frightened children, the wives and mothers who suffer the cruel agony of suspense, never knowing when the fateful message will come which will blot the sun from the sky; for the men who live under conditions which are hateful to them, despising the whole gruesome business in which they are engaged, longing to be back amid the peaceful pursuits of their homes; for all who are victims of the madness of our time.

We pray that a new sanity may come into the minds of men, that they may see that Thou art calling them to understand one another, forgive one another and cooperate with one another. Raise up leaders for the work of peace. Make us ready to do our part.

Speak to us in this day when our minds are darkened by discouragement, our eyes dim from straining for the dawn. Remind us of Christ's promise, "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Remind us of his beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Remind us that in him are unexhausted springs of wisdom and understanding, in him our little efforts become part of Thine eternal purpose; that looking beyond the wild confusion of the hour, we may be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in Thy work, knowing that no labor wrought for Thee can be in vain. Amen.

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Kennedy, Gerald: "The Sermon as Drama" (March)
Low, A. Ritchie: "Helping People by Mail" (April)
Moore, Ansley C.: "Preacher in the Pew" (November)
Parker, George Lawrence: "The 'Futility' of Preaching" (May)
Rose, Ivan Murray: "I Memorize My Scripture" (September)
Schroeder, Martin: "The Country Church is Different!" (June)
Stuber, Stanley I.: "The Light Shineth" (December)
Valentine, Ralph E.: "The Pastor's Relation to Church Finances" (October)

Book of the Month

Adams, Hampton: "You and Your Minister" (March)
Asch, Sholem: "The Nazarene" (April)
Atkins, Gaius Glenn: "Master Sermons of the Nineteenth Century" (July)
Baillie, John: "Our Knowledge of God" (February)
Dobyns, Fletcher: "The Amazing Story of Repeal" (May)
Eastman, Fred: "Men of Power" (June)
Fagerburg, Frank B.: "Is This Religion?" (January)
Horton, Walter M.: "Can Christianity Save Civilization?" (October)
Johnson, F. Ernest: "The Social Gospel Reexamined" (December)
Morrison, Charles Clayton: "What Is Christianity?" (November)
Petty, Carl Wallace: "The Evening Altar" (August)
Tigner, Hugh Stevenson: "Our Prodigal Son Culture", (September)

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'The Light Shineth'

A Sermon Set to Music—Suggested for Christmas Morning Service

By Stanley I. Stuber

THE theme and text is that of the Northern Baptist Convention for 1940. It is recommended that the whole morning service be built around this theme, using Psalm 43:3-5 as a Call to Worship, John 1:1-14 as a Scripture lesson, and the Morning Prayer from Hunter's "Devotional Services," with the congregation praying in unison "For a Better World" by Walter Rauschenbusch.

The following hymns may be used: "Lord of All Being," Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1848, Virgil C. Taylor, 1847, Louvan, I. M.; "O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go," George Matheson, 1882, Albert Peare, 1885, St. Margaret; "Let There Be Light, Lord God of Hosts," William Merrell Vories, 1908, William Boyd, 1868, Pentecost, L. M.

Text: John 1:5

"And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."—*King James Version*

"Amid the darkness the Light shone, but the darkness did not master it."—*Moffatt*

"The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overpowered it."—*Weymouth*

"The light is still shining in the darkness, for the darkness has never put it out."—*Goodspeed*

"And the Light shines in the darkness,

And the darkness never overpowered it."—*20th Century New Testament*

"And the light shone on in the darkness, and the darkness overcame it not."—*Torrey*

"And the light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overwhelmed it."—*Centenary*

A Radiant Verse

To get the real meaning out of this radiant verse of Scripture we must look through the telescope of all these various translations and remember, as we do so, that the King James version is only another translation like Moffatt's or Goodspeed's. Moreover, it does not have behind it the resources of modern biblical scholarship as do the other translations. They take us as close to the original manuscripts as we can possibly get and bring us the clearest English interpretation. Professor Charles Torrey claims to go even beyond the Greek and take us back to the language—the Aramaic—which our Lord is supposed to have spoken.

Now, as we look at John 1:15 through these modern translations, what do we discover? In the first place, we find that the Light is still shining in the darkness. This Light of the World, Christ, is *still* in the world. There it is—still shining! This present tense, filled with immediate action, gives us confidence and hope and faith.

But the second great lesson, which we find in the new translations and not in the King James, is more important than the first. For we discover that the Light is not only still shining, but that it cannot be put out!

Still Shining

The King James reading is weak here. It says: "and the darkness comprehended it not." In this case the word "comprehended" does not mean very much. But notice how strong some of the other readings make it: ". . . the darkness did not *master* it." ". . . the darkness has not *overpowered* it." ". . . the darkness has *never put it out.*" Every one of the new versions makes this point clear: the darkness of this world has never been able to conquer the Light. It is still shining today amid the darkness, the evil, the gloom, the sin of this world.

Nothing should be able to give us a greater sense of security than this fact. We must bear in mind that although things do look black there are still love and truth and beauty in the world. And these will break through to give us a personal victory, if we will only give them half a chance. The Light of the World represents the eternal things of this life—unseen but very real—and these eternal realities can never be conquered by any dictator or any state or combination of nations, no matter how strong they may be or how long they rule.

"The Light is still shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overwhelmed it."

As I have been thinking about this text, thoughts about the development of physical light, from the crude oil lamp to the electric light, the radio tube, the x-ray and violet ray, have flashed again and again through my mind. I have seen the beautiful lighted fountains, the combination of water, music and fireworks at the New York World's Fair, and the lovely Tower of the Sun, with the sweet music of the carillon, at the Golden Gate International Exposition. I have seen the great white ways of our cities and marveled at it all.

But I also know that in many o the nations of this world the lights o the cities have to be "blacked out, and that the great ocean liners hav had to have their lights dimmed. Th more I think about it, the more realize that not only the lights of citie and ocean liners have been blacke out, but also that the lights in th hearts of millions of men and wome have been put out. Disillusionment despair, destruction have brought ther darkness. And how terrible is tha darkness!

It is plain enough that we need th Light of the World once more. 1. W need it in the form of a Lighthouse that we may not steer our ships ont the rocks. 2. We need it as a Guide so that we may have a goal, an ob jective in life. 3. We need it as Healing Power, as an x-ray, as ra dium, to heal our wounds, our sins our broken hearts. 4. We need it a an Inner Light, so that the fires o our faith and our hope may never g out. 5. And finally, we need it as Challenge—a challenge to be brave, challenge to keep on striving and neve give up.

'Lead, Kindly Light'

It has been said that the spiritua life of England is beautifully inter twined with a group of country vicar ages, and in some of these were me who sang as well as preached, and ar remembered more for their songs tha for their sermons. George Herber was one of these, and not far away, short drive south of Winchester, wa another, John Keble of Hursley. Her at the home of Keble the leaders o the original Oxford Movement met and here George Herbert and Joh Henry Newman were brought to gether. With all their influence in th Oxford Movement, it is not for tha they are chiefly remembered today but because one wrote "Lead, Kindl Light," and the other wrote "Sun o My Soul."

There is so much to say on thi theme! I have collected much materia which might be worked into a sermon But perhaps the most effective way t make my five points clear will be b means of five hymns, all familiar i tune and words.

1

While the organist plays "Let th Lower Lights be Burning," let u think of the words and their implica tion for today. This is far from a

assic as a hymn, yet it has won many soul to Christ and reminds us of the ghthouses along the coast, like those ree which guide ships into the haven Boothbay Harbor, Maine. It not ly depicts God's constant beam of ving light, but also the fact that ery Christian should be as a light-use, helping to guide sea tossed souls to a harbor of inner peace and se-rity.

(The organist plays the hymn softly hile the minister reads the words. It not necessary that the reader fit the ords to the music. The organist may op playing after each reading or may ntinue playing, making a gradual ansition.)

Brightly beams our Father's mercy
From His lighthouse ever more,
But to us He gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore.

Dark the night of sin has settled,
Loud the angry billows roar;
Eager eyes are watching, longing,
For the lights along the shore.

Trim your feeble lamp, my brother:
Some poor sailor tempest tossed,
Trying now to make the harbor,
In the darkness may be lost.

. . . .

Let the lower lights be burning!
Send a gleam across the wave!
Some poor fainting struggling seaman
You may rescue, you may save.

II

The great hymns of the church ow no sect or creed or class. They ite us and they guide us. A Roman atholic finds in Christ his Guide. So ould all of us, since his way leads ward all that is highest and best.

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on.
The night is dark, and I am far from home—
Lead thou me on.
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step enough for me.

So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on;
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

(John Henry Newman)

III

Christ comes to us not only as a ghthouse and a guide, but also as a aling power, as the Sun of Right-usness. Sometimes he comes in the rm of the Great Physician. At other nes he comes in the healing rays of e sunlight, in the powerful x-rays, in the form of radium. The Light the World is still active as a heal-g force, and is continually driving vay germs and disease, both physical d spiritual.

Thou Lord of Life, our saving health,
Who makest thy suffering ones our care,
Our gifts are still our truest wealth,
To serve thee our sincerest prayer.

To heal the wound, to still the pain,
And strength to failing pulses bring,
Until the lame shall leap again,
And the parched lips with gladness sing.

(Samuel Longfellow)

IV

Unless we have within our souls what the Quakers call the "inner light," we shall never appreciate the full meaning and significance of the Light of the World. For it is only as Christ's rays reach down into our hearts, that the miracles begin to happen.

Walk in the light; and thou shalt find
Thy heart made truly his,
Who dwells in cloudless light enshrined,
In whom no darkness is.

Walk in the light; and thou shalt own
Thy darkness passed away,
Because that light hath on thee shone
In which is perfect day.

Walk in the light; and thine shall be
A path, though thorny, bright;
For God, by grace, shall dwell in thee,
And God himself is light.

(Bernard Barton)

V

Finally, the Light of the World comes to us as a tremendous challenge. It is the challenge which has faced Christians recently at Oxford, Edinburgh, Madras, Geneva and Amsterdam. It is the challenge to take the high way, to accept the path of brotherhood and peace, to build the Kingdom of God even upon this earth. It is the challenge to stand firm for Christian principles, taking the whole armor of God, and fighting in love against the powers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places. As the bishops of the new Methodist Church say, "Let us look up and behold the morning." As the young people at Amsterdam put it, "We are expecting new light to break upon our problems from His Word." And as John R. Mott said at Madras: "We do not come together in despair, seeing only the dark background. . . . We well know that nothing has happened in these recent difficult years which invalidates the claims of Jesus Christ."

And the Master said: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Light of the world, we hail thee,
Flushing the eastern skies;
Never shall darkness veil thee
Again from human eyes;
Too long, alas, withholden,
Now spread from shore to shore;
Thy light, so glad and golden,
Shall set on earth no more.

Light of the world, illumine
This darkened earth of thine,
Till everything that's human
Be filled with the divine;
Till every tongue and nation,
From sin's dominion free,
Rise in the new creation
Which springs from love and thee.

(John S. B. Monsell)

(Organist stops playing here.)

Our Eternal Light

Last April the Ner Ha-Tamid, or "eternal light," was brought from Palestine to burn in the Jewish Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. This light will burn continuously as a memorial to those who gave their lives seeking the establishment of a Jewish national home in the Holy Land. It is a beautiful symbol. But we Christians also have an eternal light, which never goes out, although the dark clouds of this world may hide it for a while or two. *"The light is still shining in the darkness, for the darkness has never put it out!"*

Let us all now join in singing, "Let There be Light, Lord God of Hosts."

(The following Benediction may be used:)

The Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

TODAY'S NEED

THERE was never a time when the Christmas gospel was more needed. Sin and crime and wrong still stalk abroad in this world. In some places we see a reversion to barbarism and inhumanity and persecution that we had believed to be no longer possible among men.

Everything that human power can suggest has been tried and has failed utterly. . . .

There is one thing, however, which this world has not yet tried, and that is a complete surrender to Jesus Christ —a complete acceptance of his divine grace and guidance. This is the Christmas gospel that should not be viewed as merely an event that took place two thousand years ago.

It is a gospel mighty enough to change and transform the whole of human life, if we will accept it. Here is a gospel which will leave no place in men's hearts for the spirit of hate, or intolerance, or prejudice, and which will fill us with the spirit of brotherhood and good will toward all men of our world, of whatever race, nation or color.

WILLIAM T. MANNING.

THE need of the hour is not more factories or materials, not more railroads or steamships, not more armies or more navies—but rather, more education based on the life and teachings of Jesus.

ROGER BABSON.

• WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE •

REV. THEODORE CUYLER SPEERS *graduated from Princeton University in 1921, and following his graduation spent a year in China. In 1925 he received his theological degree from Union Theological Seminary. Following an eight-year pastorate at First Presbyterian Church, Utica, N. Y., he was called to Central Presbyterian Church in New York city. He spent two summers preaching in England and Scotland. He is the author of* *The Power of the Commonplace.* *Dr. Speers' last sermon contributed to the* *Pulpit* *was published in a Young Ministers' number, in 1931. The preachers represented in that issue were named by their seminaries as the "most promising" of recent graduates.*

A son of the manse, Rev. HERBERT BEECHER HUDNUT *held pastorates in Cleveland and Pittsburgh and has recently become pastor of the Woodward Avenue Presbyterian Church in Detroit. Before entering the ministry he had six years' experience in the steel business in Youngstown, Ohio. He received his theological training at Western Seminary, Pittsburgh. He is a son of Rev. William H. Hudnut, who for many years served the First Presbyterian Church in Youngstown, and a brother of William H. Hudnut, Jr., who recently became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Ill.*

On October 1 of this year Rev. OLIVER J. HART *became rector of the famous Trinity Church, Boston. Earlier pastorates were in Macon, Ga., and Chattanooga, Tenn., and at St. John's Church, Washington, D. C. He has been a leader in the activities* the Episcopal Church since his ordination in 1917. H was awarded theological degrees by General Theologic Seminary and Union Theological Seminary.

Graduating from Central College, Fa ette, Mo., Rev. W. B. SELAH attended the Kansas Ci School of Law for a year, then pursued theological cours at Yale Divinity School. His pastorates have been Clinton and Kansas City, Mo., and at St. John's Metho ist Church, Memphis, Tenn., where he now minister He has preached at many colleges and universities in t south.

Rev. ALBERT R. PHILLIPS *graduate* from Harvard University in 1934, and received his B.I degree from Andover Newton Theological School thr years later. He is now in his first pastorate, First Ba tist Church, Manchester, Vt.

For many years Rev. CLARENCE MACARTNEY *has led the activities of First Presbyteria* Church, Pittsburgh, Pa. A former moderator of t Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., Dr. Macartney widely known as a leader of the evangelical forces that denomination. He has written many books.

Rev. FRANK HALLIDAY FERRIS *is mi* ister of the Fairmount Presbyterian Church, Clevelan Ohio.

Rev. STANLEY I. STUBER *is chapla* of the Clifton Springs Sanitarium, Clifton Springs, N.

TITLES AND TEXTS

What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

JOHN PAUL JONES, Union Church of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, N. Y. "The Ramparts We Watch." Ephesians 6:13—"Wherefore take up the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, stand."

HENRY FRIEDMAN, Memorial Methodist, La Crosse, Wis. "Except Jehovah Build the House." Psalm 12:1—"Except Jehovah build the house, they labor in vain who build it."

D. W. CHARLTON, Eastport Baptist, Annapolis, Md. "What Men Must Unlearn." Isa. 2:4, 5—"No longer shall men learn to fight. . . . Let us live by the light of the Eternal."

FOR YOUR SERMON AND TEXT

. . . . . .
Title of sermon
. . . . . .
Text used (write out the text)
. . . . . .
Name of minister
. . . . . .
Name of church
. . . . . .
Address

W. OLIVER HARRISON, First Christian, Pecos, Tex. "N By Arms Alone." I Sam. 4:5—"And when the ark the covenant of Jehovah came into camp, all Isra shouted with a great shout."

GERALD J. HUENINK, First Presbyterian, Goshen, N. "Why Should God Bless America?" Psalm 33:12- "Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah, the pe ple whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance."

HENRY S. NOON, Memorial Methodist, Paoli, Pa. "Ad quate Preparedness." Eph. 6:11—"Put on the who armor of God."

C. M. ORCUTT, First Congregational, Hartington, Ne "Jesus, Prince of Peace." Acts 5:31—"Him did G exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and Savior. . ,"

PAUL MORRISON, Emmanuel Methodist, Lockport, N. "Can Christianity Save Civilization?" Isa. 58:12- "Thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach; t restorer of paths to dwell in."

CLYDE H. WILCOX, First Congregational, St. Clair, Mic "New Gods for Old." Acts 17:18b—". . . he seeme to be a setter-forth of strange gods."

HAROLD C. DEWINDT, Memorial Presbyterian, Middl town, N. Y. "The Indispensable Man." John 15:5- "For without me you can do nothing."

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

MR. ROOSEVELT has achieved the unprecedented. He has been elected to a third term in the presidency. I opposed him on this ound. It seemed to me that the precedent which lim-ed the tenure of this office to two terms was not only a venerable tradition but a salutary provision for our system of government. I could see no reason in the present situation for violating this pro-sion. Had Mr. Roosevelt been running for a second rm, I could have found no decisive reason to prefer s opponent. Now that he is elected, I believe that ere are two duties which all good citizens confront. ne is to support him in every good policy which he oposes, to hold up his hands in a spirit of patriotism hich transcends all partisanship, and to help him both encouragement and by criticism to keep his reiterated edges not to take this country into war. The other is keep a vigilant eye upon the evil forces which will ourish under a third term. The third term opposition as not primarily motivated by personal hostility to Ir. Roosevelt. As one who shared this opposition, my e was focused upon the party machine which, under e President's leadership and by virtue of the enor-ous patronage at his disposal and the vast benefits hich he is empowered to confer upon great blocs and asses of our voting population, tends to create a one-rty system. No citizen except the blind partisan can gard such a development without grave concern. The ird term issue is therefore a continuing issue. Its im-ications were not settled on November 5, and will not settled until November 1944. The next four years ill be third term years. I, for one, intend to do my ttle bit to make sure that the evils which the no-third-rm precedent was designed to guard against shall not me to pass.

The National Election

The Book of the Month

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL REEXAMINED. *By F. Ernest Johnson. The Rauschenbusch Lectures. Harper, $2.00.*

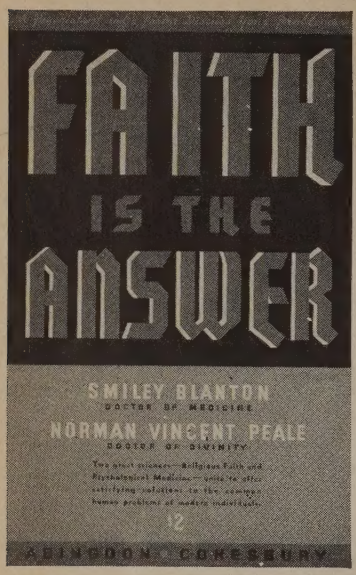
THIS book arrives at the psychological moment. The social gospel has been put on the defensive by certain developments in theology. It has al-ays been opposed by the fundamentalist school of eology and by large groups of the laity. But now there a certain disillusionment even among those who for-erly saw in the application of Christian ethics to social sues a fresh discovery of the meaning of the gospel. r. Johnson is not among the disillusioned. This book an expression of his insight into the social implications the theology that is now in the way of superseding e ethical "liberalism" which held the field for nearly a lf century. Dr. Johnson believes that Christianity's siness is to "change the world," that human effort is ot foredoomed to futility, but that Christian faith rnishes the only way of conceiving man which will vest his effort with hope and crown it with achievement. I have found every chapter not only highly suggestive but positively constructive. The author comes nearer building a bridge between the ethical theology of "liberalism" and the realistic theology of neo-orthodoxy than any writer whose work I have read. His analysis of our secular culture is brilliant and penetrating. And his proposals for the church's orientation in the face of a world in chaos are strikingly relevant and realistic. This book has made me acquainted with a scholar I have long known and admired, though without suspecting that in addition to his primary field of education (he is professor of education in Columbia University) he is so thoroughly at home in the field of Christian theology. I wish my word might extend the reading of this book to every minister in the land.

A Thought for the Month

THE greatest shock which Christian faith has received in our day is its awakening to the fact of its own impotence. It is hard to admit that Christianity after nearly twenty centuries has made so little difference in the civilization of that part of the world where it has been the dominant and virtually the exclusive religion. But the fact is indisputable. Something has happened, something very deep-going has happened. The time was when it was said of Christians that they had turned the world upside down. It is now evident that, despite Christianity, the world has turned upside down *again*. We live again in a pagan society. Its controlling ideas are pagan—the very opposite of Christian. Once Christianity actually molded men's minds. Its concepts were veritable windows through which Western men looked out upon the whole scene of life. These concepts determined the economic, political, aesthetic, philosophical and social thinking of the great age of faith. That is true no longer. We can acknowledge this without condoning the superstition, the authoritarianism, the corruption which characterized the Middle-Ages. Today the Christian church faces a task strikingly like that which the early Christians confronted. It has got to turn the world upside down *yet again*. But the trouble is that the church has itself been turned wrong side up. It, too, has been seduced by the spirit of paganism. It can make a Christian world only by being turned upside down itself. This means that it must recover and reproclaim the great convictions which belong to the genius of Christianity—the absolute sovereignty of God, together with its two corollaries: the creatureliness of man and the dignity of man as the child of God, and the headship of Jesus Christ in the church and over all things. The demonic paganism of the totalitarian state can be effectively resisted only by the divine totalitarianism of the Christian gospel.

A World Turned Upside Down

Charles Clayton Morrison



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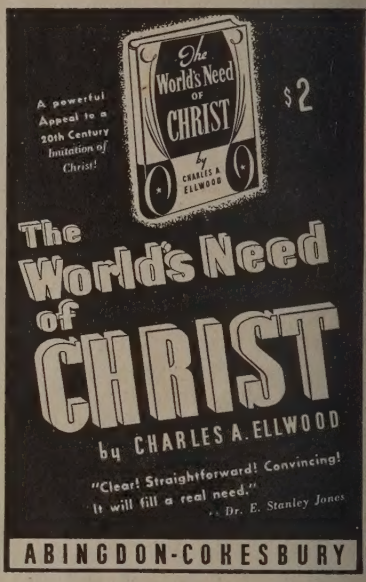
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